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The Catholic Axis

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An address delivered at meetings of THE CANADIAN PROTESTANT LEAGUE in Massey Hall, Cooke's Church, and Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Tuesday Evening, October 19, 1943.

IT IS two years now since I spoke here in Toronto on this topic of the Catholic Church and Fascism. At that time, there were many who were inclined to doubt the facts then presented to prove how deep the Vatican had its finger in the Fascist pie. Today, with the rapid unfoldment of events, those facts, and others of more serious import, are found to be true and admitted, though reluctantly, by those who doubted them two years ago. I remember being interviewed by the press on my arrival here two years ago, and how the reporters refused to believe, much less publish, any mention of the tie-up between the Vatican and the Axis. But larger newspapers than those in Toronto have since come to realize that the Vatican is a factor that must be reckoned with, in the conduct of the war as well as in the making and keeping of the peace to follow. There is a leading editorial of the September 13 issue of the N.Y. *Herald-Tribune*, next to the N.Y. *Times*, the most important paper in America, which discusses and mentions by name "The Catholic Axis".

THE CANADIAN PROTESTANT LEAGUE was formed during my visit to this city two years ago. Its object, as you well know, is to build and preserve a determined opposition to political Catholicism, and to safeguard religious liberty and democratic freedoms. For these have a distinct Protestant foundation. If Protestantism falls, democracy and freedom fall with it. In a Catholic-dominated world, there would be an end of democratic freedoms, and the universal establishment of Fascism. Lewis Mumford, noted author, shows how much the Catholic Church has been an enemy of democracy and a friend of Fascism when he says in his book, *Faith For Living*:

"The Aims of Fascism are most deeply in conflict with those of a free republic like that of the United States. In this effort, the Catholic Church has been plainly no conservator of tradition; it has been an ally—a potent ally—of the forces of destruction."

There is no use in blinking the fact any longer, that if political Catholicism again gains the ascendancy, there will be an end to religious liberty and democratic freedoms. Listen to what the late President Woodrow Wilson said:

"Our liberties are safe until the memories and experi-

ences of the past are blotted out and the Mayflower with its band of Pilgrims forgotten; until our public school system has fallen into decay and the nation into ignorance; until legislators have resigned their functions to ecclesiastical powers and their prerogatives to priests."

This wise warning of one of America's greatest Presidents could well serve as the motto for THE CANADIAN PROTESTANT LEAGUE—in fact, for a great combined "AMERICAN PROTESTANT LEAGUE" covering all of North America.

Words can easily be multiplied in *talking* about the aims and activities of the Roman Catholic Church to undermine our Protestant culture. But more important is need for *action* on our part to counteract them, and facing the facts that we must expect when victory for the United Nations crowns the fighting on the battle-fronts of the world. Brothers, husbands, sweethearts and friends of all of us here tonight are fighting and offering their lives to preserve these freedoms for us. When the fighting is over we must be prepared on the home front to continue our defense of these hard-won liberties against those who will still be active in the work of undermining them.

Our greatest enemy is the one who cloaks his motives under the guise of religion.

The Catholic Axis is no different from the Fascist Axis, and when this latter is destroyed, the first will remain and continue to function in its stead. It has the most powerful weapons, chief among which is *the pretense of safeguarding religion*. But you will find that its methods and slogans will be the same as those used by the Fascist Axis from the beginning: Communism — atheistic communism; socialism, Godless democracy—all of them mere slick, deceptive coverings for the real attack against democracy and Protestantism. Here is a sample of what Jesuit propagandists proclaimed only two years ago, shortly before the Jap attack on Pearl Harbor. It is from the Jesuit magazine *America* of May 17, 1941:

"How we Catholics have loathed and despised this Lucifer civilization, this rationalist creation of those little men who refused to bend the knee or bow the head in submission to higher authority. . . . Today, American Catholics are being asked to shed their blood for that particular kind of secularist civilization which they have been heroically repudiating for four centuries. This civilization is now called democracy, and the suggestion is being made that we send the Yanks to Europe again

to defend it. . . . All the Yanks in America will not save it from disintegration. Unless a miracle occurs it is doomed—irrevocably doomed."

In order to understand all this it is necessary to recall how this Catholic-Fascist Axis was first formed.

Time will not permit me to go too far back into the history of the background of Fascism in the Catholic Church. Suffice it to say that in one pronouncement after another the Vatican during the 19th century condemned every step toward increasing progress and freedom for the masses of the common man—all the way from the French Revolution in 1789 to the Russian Revolution of 1917. And it was this Russian Revolution that made the Vatican so desperate as to conspire with all the reactionary forces to kill off, at one blow, the mounting danger to the entire Catholic structure that these freedoms entailed. Well did Pope Pius XI hail Mussolini as "that man sent by Providence." Mussolini, however, was not the prime instigator of Fascism, for he had neither the means nor the following. When he "marched" on Rome in 1922 he hadn't the price of a dozen blackshirts to his name. The real actor behind the scenes was Pope Pius XI, aided by his Jesuit advisers. But the hand of the Vatican was not seen in the Fascist conspiracy until 1929, when all was ready for action. During the seven years that intervened, all of Europe was being made ready for the acts of Fascist aggression that followed the Lateran Pact between the Pope and Mussolini. In Germany, the Weimar Republic was undermined to make way for Hitler. In Spain, a democratic republic was allowed to take over, which in turn would be undermined and demoralized so as to make it easier to declare war on it and crush out all its supporters once and for all. France was "softened up" too in those years, making it easy prey for Nazi blitzkrieg when the right moment arrived. Even England was fooled into allowing a near-socialist government to take control—the more easy later to sabotage the efforts of the working man to gain freedom and a better standard of living. But remember, nothing was known about this, and no act of Fascist aggression occurred until the dictators had entered into solemn, written agreements with the Vatican. Then the brutal attack started—first against helpless Ethiopia, championed and publicly blessed by the whole Italian hierarchy. On October 28, 1935, Cardinal Shuster of Milan, joyfully proclaimed:

"The Italian flag is at this moment bringing in triumph the Cross of Christ to Ethiopia to free the road for the emancipation of the slaves, opening it at the same time to our missionary propaganda."

Osservatore Romano of August 22, 1935, reported that, on the very day the League of Nations met to consider the Fascist attack on helpless Ethiopia, 57 bishops and 19 archbishops of Italy sent to Mussolini a joint telegram which read as follows:

"Catholic Italy thanked Jesus Christ for the renewed greatness of the country made stronger by Mussolini's policy."

Then they combined against Republican Spain—tried out their blitzkrieg against the hapless and helpless Catholic Spanish people. And again the Catholic Church was in the forefront blessing and praising the "wonderful work of God" that the Butcher Franco was accomplishing. Every step of Fascist aggression was

abetted and aided by its counterpart in the Vatican—from the betrayal of democracy at Munich to the sad collapse of France and the setting up of Catholic Marshal Petain, "the good Marshal", the Vatican publicly called him—until finally all of Europe lay under the heel of the Nazi-Fascist dictators, and the Vatican rejoiced. Here in America, at that time, the Roman Catholic hierarchy was sure that the end of Protestant England had come, and that the United States had better come to terms with the dictators *and the Vatican*. In an arrogant and threatening warning, Bishop James H. Ryan of Omaha, Nrb., advised Uncle Sam to jump on the Vatican-Fascist bandwagon before it was too late. He said (*N.Y. Times*, May 12, 1940):

"Though conscious of the religious power of the Pope, we have chosen to remain blind to the *political* power of the Pope, who is king. . . . It would be foolhardy" he warned, "for a democratic state, whose very existence is involved in the outcome of the struggle, to neglect to make friends with that religious power whose assistance is certain to be of such inestimable value."

The identity of the Vatican and Fascist objectives was well stated by Mr. James Williams, a German refugee, in a Paris magazine at that time. He said:

"In Germany and in Central Europe, Hitler has undertaken to destroy entirely all freedom of the spirit, and his attack can be placed in the win column of the Catholic Church."

Instances and proofs of the Vatican's part in the Nazi-Fascist conspiracy could be multiplied, were there time to do so. But these are now past history. What should concern us now is the fact that, with the Nazi-Fascist armies facing humiliating defeat, the danger that Fascism may still overwhelm us is very real. For there are two Fascist wars—one of arms, the other of ideas. And as far as the Fascist war of ideas goes, we are now where we started in the beginning, before the Fascists hurled their blitzkrieg armies at us. Fascism flamed into aggression because of Russia; today the fear of Soviet Russia is being made into a weapon to undo all that has been won by blood and fighting against Nazi-Fascist armies all over the world. And here again the prime mover is the Vatican. The Jesuits a few years ago declared that Catholics in America would have to refuse to fight if we had Russia as an ally. This Jesuit magazine, which publicizes itself as "*the most influential Catholic magazine in America*," stated editorially in its issue of April 1, 1939:

"Every American Christian must be a conscientious objector in a World War where the United States is an ally of atheistic Russia. It can be said that he must refuse to be conscripted, even though he be executed for obeying God rather than Caesar."

The Vatican was sure, of course, that Soviet Russia would cease to exist after defeat by Hitler's attack in 1941. It had its priests trained to accompany Hitler into Moscow to take over religion in Russia. The Archbishop of Gorizia, Carlo Margotti, issued a pastoral letter on July 20, as follows:

"Italy has joined the anti-Bolshevist front with enthusiasm and the faith of the ancient crusaders, proving that Italian soldiers are ready to give their blood generously for civilization's victory over the blackest atheism and barbarism. Just as once the Church leaders hailed the blessed Crusaders sailing eastward to liberate Christ's sepulchre, so today we salute and bless the

Italian legions who are marching with their allies in the common struggle to open the immense prison which encloses the Russian population, depriving them of the right freely to profess their faith."

From Vatican City itself came the news on July 20, that Catholic priests, "specially trained to do missionary work in Russian territory occupied by the German armies," had already arrived in Hungary and Rumania to put this crusade into effect in the wake of Hitler's invading armies.

The Catholic press and hierarchy in America were loud in appeals and threats against President Roosevelt sending aid to Russia. The Catholic war veterans on June 27 sent a petition to President Roosevelt begging him (quote, "to reconsider your expressed intention to act in the matter of assistance to Godless Russia"). The *Catholic Brooklyn Tablet*, of July 12, quoted from some thirty Catholic newspapers to prove the overwhelming Catholic opposition to any aid to Russia in its fight for life against Hitler. The Jesuit magazine *America*, of the same date, declared:

"There can be no softening of the anathemas which Americans have pronounced on Communism as a philosophy. Those who sup with the devil must use a long spoon, and we simple Americans have no long spoon."

But Hitler's armies met terrible defeat on the Steppes of Russia, and the Vatican then tried by negotiation to make an agreement with the Kremlin to find some way of obtaining freedom of propaganda for the Roman Catholic religion in Russia. Archbishop Spellman of New York was reported to have tried to contact Stalin while he was on tour in the East. But Stalin and the Orthodox Church in Russia would have none of it. It was bitter tea for the Pope when Stalin re-established the Russian Orthodox Church, which the Vatican was sure would never come into its own again.

Russia is now the important factor for the future of peace in the world. It is through Russia that the Vatican will again attack democracy and Protestantism. Already the Clerical Fascist forces in the United States are conspiring to play their part. Father Coughlin's Christian Front is still active under many different guises. As soon as war restrictions are lifted, they will show their hand. They boast of being eighteen million strong, eighty per cent. Roman Catholic.

It is hardly necessary to mention the part played by this seditious priest in the Catholic Axis. No one has been so openly and brazenly pro-Fascist, anti-British and anti-Semitic as Father Coughlin. Even after Pearl Harbor, when England and America were under brutal assault from all sides, he and his paper, *Social Justice*, continued more anti-democratic and anti-British than ever. Here are a few of such statements from his *Social Justice*, after the sinking of the Battleships *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*. Its issue of Feb. 9, 1942, declared:

"At last the British sun began to set, and upon the land of the exploited yellow man (the Japs) there began to rise the dawn of freedom. Today, 300 million Orientals—believe it or not—are beginning to chant Britain's requiem in the words of Asia for the Asiatics."

And again:

"When Hitler attacked Russia, the people of Hungary, who are 85 per cent. Catholic, gave thanks to God that someone was going to break the neck of Communism."

It took tremendous pressure of Protestant public

opinion to force the U.S. Post Office to bar Coughlin's openly seditious *Social Justice* from the mails. But he himself has never been indicted for treason, as many minor fry of much less importance have. His bishop called Coughlin a good priest . . . "and his voice is the voice of God." Had he been a priest who said a word against the teaching or practices of the Catholic Church he would have been silenced and excommunicated without delay. But the Church permitted him to continue his seditious utterances and supported him. They have saved him now from jail as a traitor, and are keeping and safeguarding him till he can safely resume his Fascist work in the post-war world.

Already the Vatican has succeeded in straining relations between England and America, and their ally Russia. It was responsible for the break in relations between Russia and Poland; it was the Vatican who raised the cry for a cordon sanitaire shutting Russia off from Europe and the West with a string of Catholic buffer states; it is the Vatican who has sowed the seeds of suspicion against Russia's post-war intentions, making it necessary for representatives of England and America to go to Moscow now to set things straight. It is Russia, however, who has reason to be suspicious of the intentions of our State Department in Washington and the British Foreign Office in London, because of their appeasement of the Vatican. The Russian authoritative newspaper, *War and the Working Class*, has openly declared that Russia looks with disfavour on peace negotiations that are arranged by way of the Vatican and its spokesmen.

THE CANADIAN PROTESTANT LEAGUE, representing as it does, the best Protestant feeling on the North American continent, will have its works to do in influencing the peace after victory. Its special task, as I see it, would be to act so that something would be done about the Vatican as a centre of international political intrigue. It is clear to all who know the history of the past half century, that no true peace can be had in Europe, or for the world, unless this Clerical-Fascist Axis be dissolved, as the Communist Internationale has been. We are fighting for religious liberty for all, and that includes the Roman Catholic Church. But when it comes to a church, using religion as a cloak for Fascist political intrigues; then a halt should be called to the political activities of that church.

To this end I recommend the following:

- (1) Absolute separation between State and Church.
- (2) Absolute separation between School and Church.
- (3) Every religious community must constitute an autonomous and independent corporation under the law.
- (4) Individual governments should take over, within their territory, all agricultural land, owned or controlled by the Vatican, directly or through an ecclesiastical body, for the benefit of small peasants and landless farmers.

These propositions, in my opinion, are a vital condition for lasting peace in Europe. They need no commentary. The need for each of them can be seen directly and interpreted by one or another of the historic events and facts revealed above. Put to work they will go a long way toward clearing the atmosphere and the ground of Europe for a lasting peace. Otherwise, serious trouble is inevitable in the future.